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GENDER POINTS: A TIMESAVER FOR MICROCOLEOPTERISTS

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The time involved in properly preparing beetles, especially microcoleoptera, for taxonomic study is considerable. In many (most?) genera the male genitalia and/or female spermathecae must be removed by dissection and placed in an appropriate receptacle. The specimen, after being cleaned in a sonic apparatus, must then be affixed to a paper point (which had to be previously prepared and placed on a pin). Following this, the genitalia receptacle, locality label(s), and (in some instances) ecological data label(s) are added. Finally, a sex label must be cut from a sheet of same and affixed to the pin to facilitate retrieval of the specimen once it has been placed in the collection. Multiply this procedure by thousands of specimens, and the time saved by the obviation of a single step in the process becomes considerable.

A step can be eliminated by using a gender point, (i.e., a point upon which the appropriate sex symbol has been printed). Apparently, sex symbols of the appropriate size and printed upon point paper are not commercially available. The symbols must be spaced so that the point can be cut out with a point punch without cutting into adjacent symbols in the same row, or symbols in the next row. Sheets for use in making gender points have been readily made by typing (on a machine with elite type) an 8½" × 11" page with sex symbols, then submitting the page and blank point paper to a printer for reduction and printing. With elite type (symbols are 3mm high and 2mm wide), the symbols should be placed 2 spaces apart (7mm from center to center) in the rows, and the rows 2cm apart. The sheet is then reduced 50%. The resulting symbols can be easily punched out, with ample area for the pin to be inserted between the base of the point and the symbol.